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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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22 June 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Army Reconnaissance
During Movement from the Interior into Combat

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." This article is a commentary on two previous articles on the same subject which appeared in earlier issues of this journal. The author espouses reconnaissance in force and by helicopter. He agrees with a previous author that reconnaissance by army elements should reach a depth of up to three days' march, but takes issue with the other for having reconnaissance elements move out with advance engineer and air defense troops. He also comments in support of fuller use of aerial and communications reconnaissance. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (91) for 1970.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies.,

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W. E. Colby
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

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DATE OF INFO Late 1970

DATE 22 June 1973

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Reconnaissance During the Advance of a Combined-Arms Army from the Zone of Interior and Its Commitment to Battle

SOURCE Documentary

SUMMARY

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (91) for 1970 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." The author of this article is Colonel V. Tumas (Candidate of Military Sciences). This article is a commentary on two previous articles on the same subject which appeared in earlier issues of this journal. The author espouses reconnaissance in force and by helicopter. He agrees with a previous author that reconnaissance by army elements should reach a depth of up to three days' march, but takes issue with the other for having reconnaissance elements move out with advance engineer and air defense troops. He also comments in support of fuller use of aerial and communications reconnaissance.

END OF SUMMARY

COMMENT:

The Russian word translated as "reconnaissance" may also be translated "intelligence collection" or "intelligence." Colonel V. Tumas coauthored two other articles in the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" titled "Some Problems of Reconnaissance in the Preparation of the Initial Front Offensive Operation" (Issue No. 3 [64] for 1962), and "Combat with Enemy Sabotage and Reconnaissance Activities in an Army Offensive Operation" (Issue No. 3 [70] for 1963). Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past--TOP SECRET, SECRET, and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published. The SECRET version is published three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

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Reconnaissance During the Advance of a Combined-Arms Army
from the Zone of Interior and Its Commitment to Battle

by Colonel V. Tumas
Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent

Recently, questions have been raised in the pages of the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" regarding the organization and conduct of reconnaissance during the advance of large operational formations from the zone of interior and their commitment to battle.* The authors of these published articles, in our opinion, are correctly calling attention to the many facets of this problem, which has practical significance for staffs and troops. In this article we intend to elaborate somewhat on the aforementioned articles and express our own opinion on individual problems of the organization of reconnaissance during the advance of a combined-arms army from the zone of interior and its commitment to battle.

Direct planning of reconnaissance by the army staff begins immediately upon receipt of the directive for commitment to battle based on missions assigned by the commander and on receipt of the operational instructions for reconnaissance from the front staff. And we consider correct the suggestions by those comrades who recommend that we have a reconnaissance plan (on the variants of possible army actions) already available during peacetime. This will undoubtedly save a considerable amount of time in its refinement after the directive is received. However, we feel that the development of only a graphic plan, as suggested by some of the authors, is not the right approach. On the contrary, it is possible to develop a written reconnaissance plan in peacetime which will include a detailed presentation of the organization and conduct of reconnaissance. Of course, it must have a map supplement which will contain, in addition to the usual data, traffic routes, areas and times for assembling reconnaissance units, areas of daily halts, times for crossing the line of departure and adjustment lines, communications support points, refueling points, casualty evacuation points, and damaged equipment evacuation points. The advantage of a written plan over a graphic one, in our opinion, is that it provides for a faster and more complete

*Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," 1969, No. 1 (86); 1970, No. 1 (89).

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way of assigning missions to those who must carry them out. Also, if necessary, it is more readily and quickly refined and amended, e.g., to reallocate reconnaissance missions, to change the order of advance of reconnaissance forces and means, etc.; and there is a very high likelihood that substantive changes will be made in a previously prepared plan after an army has moved out for commitment to battle.

It should also be kept in mind that the planning and organization of reconnaissance under these conditions will differ somewhat from its planning and organization by the staff of an army operating in the first echelon. First of all, the staff of an advancing army develops reconnaissance measures for the period the troops are advancing toward the area of combat actions, as well as in support of their commitment to battle. In addition, an abrupt change in the situation at the front may cause a change in the army line of commitment; therefore, it may be necessary in some cases to have several variants of a reconnaissance plan instead of just one plan.

The most important task of the army staff under the conditions being discussed will be the organization of reconnaissance in the zone of advance by the troops to the area of combat actions. During the advance, reconnaissance will be carried out by the forces and means of the army and large units. However, during this period it would be more advisable to use the forces and means of tactical reconnaissance to obtain information on the traffic routes, obstacles, devastated areas, and barriers in the army zone of advance. As regards the means of operational reconnaissance, its main efforts during this period must be directed at resolving problems in support of the army's commitment to battle.

In those cases when reconnaissance of the zone of advance must be carried out within a short period of time, it is advisable to use some of the helicopters assigned to the army. This will make it possible to scan a considerable area quickly, to discover the locations of enemy units which have broken through to the rear area, his airborne landings, his diversionary-reconnaissance detachments (groups); to determine the existence of bridges and crossings along the routes of advance; and to conduct radiation and chemical reconnaissance along the routes of advance. *

It should be mentioned that Colonel N. Krivopustov made sound recommendations in his article when he suggested that large units

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should organize and conduct reconnaissance to the depth of a twenty-four-hour march and the army to the depth of two or three twenty-four-hour marches.* The timely receipt of reconnaissance information at such a depth will allow the command to organize, if necessary, a troop maneuver to bypass detected areas of destruction and obstacles and to assure their uninterrupted advance. Furthermore, reconnaissance groups sent out by large units and units must operate at maximum distances; divisional units at seventy to eighty kilometers; regimental units at forty-five to fifty kilometers.

In our opinion, when an army is advancing in the first days of the war, reconnaissance detachments up to the size of a reinforced motorized rifle (tank) battalion should be sent from the divisions of the first echelon out on the main routes. These detachments, in addition to conducting reconnaissance, will also be able, when necessary, to destroy small airborne landing forces, diversionary-reconnaissance groups, and enemy security subunits attempting to inhibit our reconnaissance missions.

Also worthy of serious attention is a question brought up in past articles of the Journal concerning the place, time, and order for radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance subunits to be sent forward to the area where the army is to be committed to battle. We fully support the authors of these articles when they recommend that these subunits must move out early to the army area of combat actions so that they can be deployed on the line of commitment to battle of large units about twenty-four hours prior to the arrival of the main forces. This will allow the acquisition of necessary reconnaissance information before the troops approach the line of commitment and will permit the commander to make, if necessary, certain changes in his plan. Moreover, we do not agree with Colonel N. Krivopustov's recommendation that these subunits move forward "jointly with the road repair and traffic control units of engineer troops, the first echelon of air defense units, and the traffic control service."

There is no doubt that the radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance subunits are quite vulnerable on the march by themselves, and the idea of providing cover for them during their advance is a highly commendable one. However, we must not tie in the activities

*Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," 1969, No. 1 (86).

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of radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance subunits with those of such special troops as road repair and traffic control because the latter will be forced to make stops along the way to repair roads, bridges, etc.

In our opinion, the radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance subunits must move directly behind the reconnaissance detachments (strong reconnaissance groups) of large units of the first echelon. In some cases, to provide cover for the aforementioned units on the march, it is advisable to detail a motorized rifle or tank subunit of company to battalion size. This subunit should be in front of the radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance subunits in order to protect the latter from enemy diversionary-reconnaissance groups and airborne landing forces. It can also resolve certain reconnaissance tasks along the advance route at the same time.

As regards the place and order of advance by the army radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance battalions, we agree with Colonel L. Shapovalov, who considers it advisable that they leave the area of their next-to-last day of rest not along one, but along two or three, army routes in the approach march formation ready to deploy and conduct reconnaissance. During the march, the radio reconnaissance subunits must constantly carry out radio intercepts while on the move and must make only brief stops.

Reconnaissance in support of the direct commitment to battle of the army requires, first of all, the use of strategic reconnaissance means. The most important mission of these means will be to provide the commander and staff with all the information needed for a massive and effective delivery of nuclear strikes by our troops carried out during the period of commitment to battle of large units. The fulfilment of this mission must be assigned primarily to aerial, special, radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance.

During this period, aerial reconnaissance will be the most efficient means of obtaining information about the enemy, since it is capable of observing large areas of enemy deployment within a short time and immediately transmitting the information directly from the aircraft. However, its main mission must be to locate large objectives (reserves, second echelons, control points, supply points of special munitions, etc.) and also to confirm the presence of smaller important enemy objectives (launch installations, radar installations, etc.) previously detected by ground reconnaissance means.

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* Important information in support of the delivery of the initial massive nuclear strike by the army may be obtained by special and long-range reconnaissance. They identify enemy nuclear attack means and establish their coordinates, establish the approach of enemy reserves or their area of concentration, and identify the deployment of control points, nuclear munitions stores, and other important targets.

Different interpretations have appeared in print concerning the timing for dropping groups of special reconnaissance and long-range reconnaissance into the enemy rear area.

In determining the most suitable time for dispatching long-range reconnaissance groups into the enemy rear area, one must proceed from the fact that they should be able to obtain the initial information on important enemy targets before the arrival of our troops at the line of deployment and, at the same time, that their premature drop should not allow the enemy command to learn our intentions concerning the commitment to battle of the army on a given axis. Therefore, we agree with the suggestions on the advisability of dispatching long-range reconnaissance groups six to eight hours before the beginning of commitment of the large units of the first echelon to battle.

The means used to dispatch long-range reconnaissance groups into the enemy rear area will depend on conditions. In some cases helicopters will be used, and in other cases, ground transportation means (automobiles, armored personnel carriers, tanks, and others). Therefore, we cannot agree with Colonel L. Shapovalov, who rejects the idea of using ground means because "much time will be lost in moving them out to the designated areas".

And the last matter to which I would like to call attention is the need to make fuller use of radio reconnaissance means for the collection of reconnaissance information.

Radio reconnaissance by radio intercepts of transmissions in the clear, coded and enciphered radiotelegrams, radio station call signs, authentication signals, and other messages, will lead to the identification, to a significant degree, of enemy groupings, and the substance and nature of his probable plan for action. This will be further supplemented by direction-finding of operating radios of enemy large unit command posts, airfields, and other installations.

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